

Issue 69 Autumn 2020

Rail Wales

Newsletter of Railfuture in Wales



Two trains heading for the exit. A Pacer and class 175 meet in the autumn sunshine at Cardiff Central. Few will shed tears for the Pacer but there are doubts about replacing the 175s with the new class 197 Civity trains – see correspondence inside. The left hand crane marks the location of the new Cardiff bus station. Photo: Peter Kingsbury

railfuture
CYMRU | WALES

WELCOME

I am pleased to be introducing the latest issue of Rail Wales. I hope all readers have managed to get through the turbulent times since the last issue was prepared in March but not sent out in paper form until June as a result of the 'lockdown'.

As I write there is no end to the uncertainty about what the next few months will hold with regard to personal mobility and public transport use. The arrival of Covid-19 in Britain has resulted in unprecedented challenges for those responsible for managing and operating the railways. On behalf of Railfuture Wales I would like to thank all rail staff who have kept passenger services going in the most difficult of times.

The key question that all who care for the future of the rail system will be asking is what are the long-term implications of the virus for rail use?

The worry is that the changes in people's daily lives that have resulted from the lockdown, will create a permanent change in behaviour. I have in mind the use of computers to enable business communication to take place on line rather than face to face. There is an ongoing debate about the extent to which work patterns initially forced on employees during the lockdown will become permanent by choice. People are also choosing to shop online rather than visit town and city centres.

Wales's rail system is likely to be less affected by a reduction in commuting to city centres than some regions of England such as the South East. However, in certain parts of Wales such as the Cardiff Valleys network, the changes in rail use may be more marked.

It is ironic that as the latest station usage data (see Spring 2020 Rail Wales) shows the recent greatest usage increase to be on the Valley lines, this part of the network appears most vulnerable to decline. However, it is with much relief I am pleased to report that the ambitious upgrade of the Valley routes appears to be proceeding. Work has started to construct the new tram train depot at Taffs Well and the electrification of the Valleys lines north of Radyr has commenced.

Whatever the short and longer term impact of the virus on demand for rail travel, Railfuture will continue to believe that rail provides an important component of the country's transport infrastructure. In a world where the impact of climate change is becoming ever more apparent, increasing rail's capacity to meet the demand for mobility, will be critical in limiting the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. Maximising route electrification

and the use of battery or hydrogen power is a key part of this strategy but even a diesel train will emit less emissions per person carried than the private car; significant use of electric cars is many years away.

I wish to close this 'Welcome' by paying tribute to Rowland Pittard. Readers will have seen with the insert in the spring issue of Rail Wales that he passed away in April. His contribution to Railfuture over many years was immense and his regular Rail Wales column on freight operations exhibited an unrivalled knowledge of this sector. In the knowledge of his illness the Railfuture Wales committee decided to make Rowland an honorary Vice President. I had the privilege of visiting him at home to present him with a certificate which records this award a few weeks before he died. Julian Langston pays tribute to Rowland in this issue. On behalf of all Railfuture Wales members I would like to express our sympathy to his family on their loss.

Peter Kingsbury

THE RETURN OF BRITISH RAIL?

Another impact of the virus has been the effective nationalisation of rail passenger services. At the start of the original lockdown, the UK and Welsh governments recognised that the dramatic fall in passenger numbers meant the train operating companies (TOCs) could not be expected to provide an even much reduced level of service without the public purse meeting the cost of lost ticket income. This resulted in emergency management agreements being put into place between the governments and TOCs. The agreements require the TOCs to provide a set level of service for a fixed payment; all ticket revenue is then handed over to the governments. There is no profit gain if income to the individual TOCs exceeds expectation. It has just been announced by the UK government that this has cost the UK government £3.5 billion since March 2020, i.e. for six months, and the arrangement has been extended for a further 18 months.

Whilst the train services are still being provided by privately owned companies, as the profit/loss outcome is carried by the government, passenger services have in effect been nationalised. There are many individual Railfuture members who have desired the renationalisation of the British rail system, whilst Railfuture's formal national position has been non-committal on this matter. However, nobody could have forecast that

even for a temporary period this would happen, especially under a UK Conservative government.

The recent announcement indicates that at the end of the emergency management agreements the franchising system operated since the privatisation of British Rail in the 1990s will not return, but we do not know what will replace it. Readers may recall something called the Williams review when Theresa May's government asked Keith Williams to undertake a thorough appraisal of the governance of the railways in Britain. This review was set up in part as a result of dissatisfaction with the franchise system. Keith Williams's findings were never published, however, a White Paper on the topic is now promised which responds to the review's recommendations. Railfuture Wales would like the review itself to be published so that all involved can benefit from reading its findings and use this to inform debate about the future of Welsh railways for which the Welsh Government now shares responsibility with the UK government.

Peter Kingsbury

RAILFUTURE WALES DURING LOCKDOWN

The arrival of Covid-19 has resulted in the Railfuture Wales committee resorting to virtual meetings and this looks to continue for the foreseeable future. Ironically, this has been welcomed by some as it had avoided the need for giving up most of a day to travel to Cardiff or Shrewsbury and has resulted in savings on travel costs. However, this illustrates the dilemma that the virus is causing the rail network and its supporters, as the use of computers and phones to hold meetings has led to fewer rail journeys taking place with less ticket revenue for Transport for Wales Rail.

The committee has provisionally decided when 'normal' circumstances return, we will hold two face to face meetings a year in Shrewsbury on a Saturday. One meeting will be followed by the AGM. The other two meetings, which in recent times have been held in Cardiff, will be held on line.

One focus of the committee's work in recent months has been to try to persuade Transport for Wales to reconsider the design of the new class 197 units to be supplied by CAF. These new trains will form the backbone of the longer distance services in Wales from 2023, operating in all parts of the country.

A dialogue has taken place with TfW Chief Executive James Price about the need to have two toilets per two car train (the majority of the new train order which are designed with one WC). Other requests have focused on the need to provide more table seats on some of the units, for use on the more scenic routes.

Mr Price has stated, as part of his response, that faster boarding and alighting than at present at busy stations has high priority to reduce dwell times which has led to the carriages having two sets of double width doors and entrance lobbies per coach which leaves less room for WCs. There is also a desire to maximise the number of seats, hence fewer table seats.

Railfuture Wales was to be invited to see mock ups of the new trains but this has not been possible as a result of the pandemic.

There is further comment on this issue from Railfuture Wales member Thomas Wheeler below.

VIEWPOINT

The Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger's Association (SARPA) have received copies of seat plans for the new class 197 trains. This shows both the standard-class-only version and the one with a first class section. The centre coach of the 3-car units is also included (the Cambrian lines are intended to see only 2-car units). It was already clear that these trains would in most respects be a downgrade compared to the existing class 175 and class 158 units for long-distance services. It is hard to tell from these drawings but it appears that poor window alignment can be added to the many complaints.

Meanwhile, Modern Railways have been reporting that electrification (possibly re-branded as decarbonisation) may be back on the agenda. Their July 2020 issue carried a map suggesting that Wolverhampton - Shrewsbury was among the most-likely routes for electrification. This is supported by the fact that the route is on the radar of Midlands Connect with their website even mentioning 'possible electrification' of the route.

With no bi-mode trains proposed outside the South East Wales Metro, Wolverhampton-Shrewsbury electrification would mean Transport for Wales' services would be running diesel under the wires for a third of their route from Birmingham International to Aberystwyth. Surely it would make sense to retain the class 158s, which could be replaced by bi-modes in the early 2030s?

Unfortunately I do not know how far fabrication of class 197 body shells in Spain has progressed. Hopefully this can be stopped before production exceeds around 40 carriage bodies (assuming the 2-car units are being built first). Unless CAF's facilities have been completely shut down due to COVID-19, I fear there is at best now just a matter of months remaining before this number is exceeded. Should the full fleet be built, the worst impacts of the class 197s will be felt as it will be necessary to use them

on the franchise's longest-distance routes for which they are totally unsuitable. We must find a way to hang onto the 175s and 158s which are far superior for long-distance work.

Thomas Wheeler

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE CLASS 197 and OTHER NEW TRAINS

I whole heartedly agree with Thomas Wheeler's views in Rail Wales Spring 2020 about the new class 197 rolling stock and especially about TfW thinking that they know what's best for us and without even asking passengers their opinions (and the same with the DFT).

To me, it should be a basic necessity for any train operator, to have various 'mockups' of rolling stock, so that passengers can be asked what features they like and dislike! As regards to only having one toilet per coach, this to me, is an absolute scandal and shouldn't be allowed to happen and in addition, when criticised, the authorities had the audacity to defend this on the grounds, that this is what the rest of the U.K are having. That's defending the indefensible and just because the rest of the UK. are accepting the dumbing down of new rolling stock, doesn't make it right!

They should be ashamed of their decision making and whoever is responsible for the specification of each new class of rolling stock, should most certainly, not be in such a position of influence. I would not employ them in any role and I know, that there are many senior train operating company manager's that are privately, angered by what is happening.

Why do we have politicians for, when they just accept whatever they are told by their civil servants & academics? There just isn't any scrutiny! In terms of rolling stock, we are going backwards but well done to Railfuture Wales for making representations about this.

Perhaps though, we need to be more forceful and in addition, write to each individual Assembly Member, telling them exactly what we think and remind them, that they are ultimately going to be blamed for all this as well as the fiasco of having different rolling stock between the Rhymney Valley and the other valley lines.

No doubt, tram / trains have a role to play, but I feel, that they should be kept within the confines of the City boundaries and any short new lines that may be built. Please can you tell me, why all valley lines are not being treated the same? I would have thought, that it was far more beneficial to have the flexibility of trains that can go anywhere, rather than being confined to a few designated routes? It will result in poor stock utilisation and the dumbing down, will just mean more and more taking to the roads, because the overall comfort, ambience and facilities of most new rolling stock, is so appalling.

Jim Maggs

NEWSLINES

Pacers rock and roll on

The much derided Pacer trains can still be experienced for a few more months in the Cardiff valleys network as a further extension of their permit to operate, despite not having persons with reduced mobility compliant toilets, has been granted until the end of 2020. A number were withdrawn in the spring as a result of the reduction in services during the lockdown but as timetables have been returning towards normal levels, it has been found that a few of the veteran trains are still required. The ongoing delay in introducing the ex Thameslink class 769 trains into regular service in the Valleys has meant the Pacers continue to be required nearly a year after their original withdrawal deadline of December 2019. Another permit extension before January 2021 seems likely.

New Stations

Bow Street, near Aberystwyth, is under construction again following a halt to work as a result of the pandemic. It is now forecast to open in 2021. The station will provide a car park and aims to attract people from the Aberystwyth area who are currently discouraged from using rail as there is limited parking at the town centre station.

Magor and Undy Walkway, a proposed new station between Newport and Severn Tunnel Junction promoted by Railfuture members Magor Action Group On Rail, is seeking funding to carry out a GRIP3 evaluation of its proposal. It has reached the shortlist of the Dept for Transport's restoring your Railway Ideas Fund and New Stations Fund.

The Welsh Government/Transport for Wales has also decided to bid to the New Stations fund. The sites identified as highest priority are

- Deeside Parkway on the Wrexham-Bidston line
- Carno on the Shrewsbury- Aberystwyth route
- St Clears between Carmarthen and Whitland, and
- Ely Mill on the Cardiff City line between Ninian Park and Waungron Road.

St Mellons Parkway: plans for a new four platform station between Cardiff and Newport are moving ahead with the developer of the station and adjacent business park holding a public consultation prior to submitting an outline application for the entire development in 2021.

Not a new station, but Pontypool & New Inn is due to realise its potential for far greater use with the grant of planning permission for a new 133 space car park with electric vehicle charging points and a new footbridge and lift linking to the island platform. At present many trains on the Newport to Hereford route do not call at the station despite it being located in a heavily populated area.

Heart of Wales line travails

Readers will be aware that the much loved route through sparsely populated areas of mid Wales, the Heart of Wales line, has been subject to a series of events that have led to closure of all or part of the route at different times in recent months. Problems have included heavy rain leading to landslips between Llandrindod Wells and Knighton and the most significant freight train derailment to occur in Wales for many years at Llangennech, at the southern end of the line. Here freight traffic from Pembrokeshire which is normally routed over the Swansea District avoiding line uses Heart of Wales tracks for several miles.

Railfuture Wales has written to Network Rail regarding the lengthy closures. Bill Kelly the head of NR Wales has replied advising that engineers are working hard to stabilise the tracks and embankments where the landslips have occurred and are installing new culverts to help drain water more quickly and prevent future flooding. NR is also installing CCTV at targeted locations to allow it to remotely monitor water levels during future storms. It is aimed to complete this work in November. This will allow for the resumption of passenger services on the northern section of the line – as far south as Pantyffynnon – while work continues to restore the railway at the freight derailment site in Llangennech into the New Year.

FAREWELL TO ROWLAND

Rowland Pittard, stalwart campaigner for Railfuture and many other organisations, passed away on 7th April. He had been suffering from a debilitating lung disease that progressively limited his mobility during the last year, but he continued his activities as secretary of Railfuture Wales with enthusiasm to the end. He leaves one sister: Helen.

Born in July 1942, Rowland's early life was spent in Tondu, a coal mining village north of Bridgend, South Wales. His bedroom window looked out over the Tondu Ogmores Junction Sidings, and his grandfather, father, uncle and cousin all worked in the rail industry. On his first birthday he was treated to a ride on a steam locomotive between Tondu and Pyle.

Railway timetables deputised as place mats in the Pittard family home, and he soon developed an interest in them. In time he built up one of the largest collections in the country, now distributed across the National Library of Wales, Glamorgan Trust, Bluebell Trust and others.

A BSc in Geography and Geology followed by a teaching diploma set Rowland on a teaching career. While he was deputy head of Maesteg Comprehensive, Mike Watson (who has also served on the Railfuture Wales committee for many years) met him while on a teacher training placement. Mike remembers how they discovered a mutual interest in railways before he moved on.



Throughout his life Rowland had the travel bug, visiting over 100 countries in his 77 years. While he was teaching, he could only travel during school holidays, sometimes taking trips of up to five weeks to explore far-flung tracts of the world by rail. One summer he visited India, Ceylon, Pakistan and Nepal; the following year saw him exploring South America. He recalled that the long ride on the narrow-gauge line from the Bolivian

border to Esquel in Argentina was one of the most interesting journeys he had ever made.

Closer to home he achieved his goal of travelling on every passenger line in the UK and Ireland, as well as many freight lines. He regarded it a boon if he could be on the last service to run before a line closed, which he did many times, especially in Wales.

Rowland had a long history of campaigning and was passionate about promoting causes close to his heart. The Gwili Railway, formed over forty years ago to save part of the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth line, was one such, and he was immensely proud of being a founding member and director. Rowland was the last survivor of the Gwili's founding fathers.

Railfuture Wales will be the poorer for his passing, and he will be difficult to replace. As secretary for many years, he devoted huge amounts of time and energy to campaigning: researching and writing papers; responding to consultations from government (central and local); liaising with the rail industry and environmental organisations. He represented the branch at countless meetings, ensuring Railfuture's views were known, forcefully when necessary.

David Mawdsley (Acting Chairman of the North Wales branch several years ago) remembers Rowland well from some of those meetings. He says, 'Several features of Rowland's character were immediately apparent. Firstly, his impressive knowledge of the rail network and his enthusiasm for its future development. Secondly, his ability to communicate successfully with the officials whom we met. Rowland knew them well, but perhaps more importantly, they knew him and respected his views. His contribution enabled Railfuture Wales to achieve a standing to which other organisations could only aspire.'

Nationally, he served on the Passenger and Freight committees and was a director on the UK Railfuture board from March 2004 to May 2009. Jerry Alderson is the only current director who served with Rowland and says, 'I have many memories of Rowland at Board meetings, as well as conferences and other events. I will never forget about the "Welsh dimension" or that Wales is a nation and not a region.'

His talent for meticulous research enabled him to root out information from many sources within the railway world; he wrote a regular digest of freight activity for *Rail Wales* and edited the Wales branch column for *Railwatch*. Outside Railfuture he wrote for magazines such as *Branch Line News*,

Today's Railways UK and *Railway World*, as well as contributing to several books.

Passionate as he was about railways, they weren't Rowland's only interest. He played a part in many organisations, such as the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (of which he was a lifelong member). He volunteered with the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) for over forty years, serving as a director between 1993 and 2002.

Several organisations, including YHA, have recognised his many years' service with awards and medals. In March, Railfuture Wales Chairman, Peter Kingsbury, presented him with the honorary award of Vice President in recognition of his long and tireless service to the branch.

Railways were in Rowland's blood, and to the last he had a deep commitment to promoting their future. Only a week before his death he was actively working for Railfuture, preparing a response from Wales to a paper from the Railfuture board.

Whether it was travelling the world, helping to preserve a railway in west Wales or fighting for the Welsh countryside, Rowland lived the life that interested him, and he lived it to the full. I salute him.

Julian Langston

MORE CASH FOR WELSH RAILWAYS?

A 'multi-million (pound) boost' for Welsh railways has been promised by the Westminster government in an announcement on 21st August. It is intended to 'level up infrastructure and improve journeys for passengers'

The Department for Transport (DfT) has pledged the money for the following schemes:

- £5.8 million to start designing the proposed upgrade of Cardiff Central station. This is to provide capacity for more people, including better access throughout the station
- Almost £2 million to develop proposals to speed up journeys between Severn Tunnel Junction and Swansea, and between Chester and Llandudno Junction
- £3 million to progress plans for upgrading signalling on the Cambrian lines from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli
- An unspecified sum to help continue providing step-free access to stations.

The future of railways across the UK has been thrown into doubt by the Covid-19 crisis as ridership fell to as low as 5% of normal in a matter of weeks. Initial official instructions to only use public transport if absolutely necessary have now been eased and passengers are returning. Nevertheless, the railway industry like many others has taken a huge financial hit over the last six months, and railway experts are worried about how long the Treasury will continue to foot the enormous bills incurred.

In this context Railfuture Wales welcomes the statement from Transport Secretary Grant Shapps that 'We want to transform travel for passengers and, as we build back better from Covid-19, we will ensure our investment helps to level up all parts of the UK. By upgrading, improving, and – crucially –modernising our railways, we will make good on our promise to deliver the reliable journeys passengers deserve.'

It is, however, important to recognise that most of this money is just for design work. Making the enhancements promised will cost much, much more.

The announcement refers to £343 million of investment in Welsh railways from Westminster, but most of this has already been spent or allocated. It's unclear what it refers to, but it may include the completed electrification of the South Wales main line from the Severn Tunnel to Cardiff and £125 million promised by DfT to contribute to wiring the Cardiff Valley Lines. Money previously allocated under the *Access for All* scheme to provide step-free access to stations could also be part of this.

Some of the design work mentioned has already been done, and Network Rail has confirmed that this will be taken into account. For example, they have carried out several studies into speeding up the relief lines between Cardiff Central and Severn Tunnel Junction to allow more use of these by passenger trains. One, in 2007, concluded it would be feasible to increase speed limits between Cardiff and Newport from 60mph to 100mph, and between Newport and Severn Tunnel Junction from 40mph to 75mph. In 2007 this was forecast to cost £27 million. Studies such as this will be updated by more recent enhancements, such as electrification, and the Newport and Cardiff area re-signalling schemes.

Julian Langston

SURELY WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS?

A plea for a proper system of integration between trains and buses on the Heart of Wales Line!

By 73097

I would be surprised if I was the only Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association member to be very frustrated by the lack of a proper system of bus/rail co-ordination in the UK, and especially along the route of the Heart of Wales Line.

If you live in a large city such as London, train and bus frequencies are such that there is no need to worry about whether timetables are co-ordinated between modes. If, for example, you arrive at Euston from Llandrindod, numerous buses on a wide variety of routes call at the station and run every few minutes throughout the day, so that if you miss one bus you know that another will not be far away. Moreover there are tube services from both Euston and Euston Square stations, with trains being at least as frequent as the buses. Ticketing is simplicity itself, for example by the use of an Oyster card, with no need to rebook whenever you change from train to tube to bus.

I doubt whether many people who live in the cities have any concept of how infrequent and uncoordinated public transport is in the depths of mid Wales. Let us take the example of Llandrindod, where a new bus station opened last year almost on the southbound rail platform, thus on the face of it providing an ideal bus/rail interchange. It is well served in Powys terms by buses to and from Newtown, Hereford, Rhayader, Builth Wells, Cardiff etc. The Newtown to Cardiff service (T4) even runs on Sundays (the only bus service to do so in the former county of Radnor). So Llandrindod has better bus services now than at any time in its history – and while in HoWLTA we moan about the trains running only every four hours or so, at least there are two each way on Sundays, which was not the case until the 1980s.

BUT – the trains are provided by Transport for Wales and the buses by Stagecoach, Sargeants and Celtic Travel, so there are four different organisations involved and precious little attempt is made to advertise connections between any of them. In fact connections are often possible (the buses are quite well timed to meet each other in Llandrindod), but if your bus or train is late, you can forget any hope of the other services waiting for you. One reason for this is that from personal experience most train and bus crews have very little idea about the activities of the other

companies, and in any case would be disciplined if they delayed (say) their train for (say) a late running bus. And with (usually) a two or four hour wait for the next service, that really does matter! Politicians often talk about the need to make greater use of public transport for the sake of the environment – quite right, but do they really expect people to rely on such haphazard arrangements when planning their journeys?

And then there is the ticketing! I can recall a number of occasions over the years when an 'Oyster Card for Wales' ('Red Dragon Card'?) has been talked about – but have we got such a thing? – no, we have not. This is not the place for political comment, but it is a fact that the rail and bus services in this country are operated by private companies, which greatly limits the ability of governments to impose any kind of unitary ticketing system – coupled with which we have what is probably the most complicated rail ticketing system in the world! There are various passes covering parts or the whole of Wales, by bus and/or by train, but nothing as straightforward as the multi-modal fare systems in London, Manchester and elsewhere.

Of course, the plethora of private bus and rail companies also means that co-ordinated timetabling is extremely difficult to achieve, not being helped by the fact that train timetables (fixed by TfW) can change once or possibly twice a year, whereas bus times (set by TfW, the county councils or the bus companies themselves) can be amended at rather shorter notice. On top of which I could show you bus times displayed at some mid Wales bus stops which are years out of date. My basic point is that unless public transport is easy to understand and use, many people will not even think of using it.

I imagine I am not alone among members in being familiar with the public transport systems of other European counties. You may well share my despair that a goodly number of them – Switzerland being the gold standard, but also the Netherlands, Germany etc – have long had very well coordinated public transport networks, whereas on this side of the Channel we are still in the Dark Ages!

So, this is a plea to our politicians - at county, Welsh and UK levels – please make radical changes as a matter of urgency to sort out this mess and make life a whole lot easier for those who would like to make far more use of buses and trains, but cannot do so without properly integrated services and ticketing.

NB The above article was first published in the Heart of Wales Line Traveller's Association magazine and is reproduced with the Association's' permission.

TRANSFORM CYMRU

Railfuture Wales has joined a new coalition of groups who wish to see a more sustainable transport network introduced in Wales. The coalition is titled Transform Cymru. It has a vision for a sustainable, affordable, inclusive and safe transport network for Wales which meets the needs of all passengers regardless of background or ability. Members include Sustrans, Living Streets, Confederation of Passenger Transport, Travelline Cymru, Asthma UK and Tenovus Cancer Care. Further information can be found on twitter @CymruTransform.

ATTRACTING PASSENGERS BACK TO RAIL

Replacing the Railfuture national conference this year is a webinar with the focus on 'Attracting Passengers Back to Rail'- see back page. The event takes place on the morning of Sat 3rd October and will be conducted via Zoom. It is free to take part and offers the chance to hear five eminent speakers from the rail industry. Register by the 2nd October. Further details are available at:

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/webinar>

Thanks are extended to all who contributed to this issue. In all cases, any opinions expressed are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily represent *Railfuture* policy. Material for the next issue – articles, letters, photos or comments – should be sent to the editor, Peter Kingsbury at peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk or by post to 22 Winchester Avenue, Penylan, Cardiff CF23 9BT, by 28th February for the spring 2021 issue. The editor may edit letters for publication.

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The message on the side of this Pacer train at Cardiff Central is an optimistic one. However, these 35-year-old trains are likely to be operating for a while yet as the commissioning of the replacement rolling stock to operate on the Valleys lines is further delayed: see page 7. Photo: Peter Kingsbury

Attracting passengers back to rail



www.railfuture.org.uk/webinar

Britain's railway faces its greatest threat since the 1960s Beeching cuts. COVID-19 caused patronage to collapse. It has only partly recovered. The government will not keep the railway afloat at vast cost indefinitely. Fare income from passengers is vital. The public must use the railway or risk losing it.

Rail travel must be safe, value for money, punctual, convenient and enjoyable. Our rail industry speakers represent organisations that can offer expert advice or take necessary actions to encourage people to use Britain's railway.

Webinar includes a Q&A – it's your chance to tell senior people in the rail industry what you want from your railway

Saturday 3 October 2020 #ReturnToRail

11.00 - 12.30 **Admission FREE** - booking essential



Charlene Wallace
Director for National Passenger & Customer Experience
Network Rail



Jacqueline Starr
Chief Operating Officer (pre-recorded video)
Rail Delivery Group



Ali Chegini
Director of Systems and Health
RSSB



Peter Sargant
Head of Rail Development
West Midlands Rail Executive



Linda McCord
Senior Stakeholder Manager
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